



Queensland Government

Education Queensland International

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Homestay

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Welcome to EQI homestay

Living with an Australian host family is a great way to experience Australia's fantastic lifestyle. By living in a safe, caring and supportive home environment you can immerse yourself in your studies, enjoy being part of a community and develop lasting friendships with your homestay family.

About your homestay

Your school's Homestay Coordinator is responsible for selecting homestay families. Most families are from the school community, and some may have children at the school you will attend.

Families are visited and interviewed by the Homestay Coordinator to ensure they are suitable homestay hosts. They are chosen for their friendliness, availability, and the care and respect they have for international students; not because of the size or type of house they live in. You should respect your homestay hosts and treat their home and possessions with care.

Your care is the highest priority for EQI and your school. If you have a problem with your host family you should discuss it with them or your Homestay Coordinator to resolve the issue.

Changes to your homestay placement will not be permitted on the basis of your host's ethnic background, the size or age of the home, the family income level, the requirement for you to help with light household tasks, or the distance from your friends.

During your stay in Queensland you will see and experience lots of amazing new things. Try to share your culture with your host family and don't judge something as a negative just because it is different.

Australian families are not all the same

Australian families, like families everywhere, differ from each other in many ways. Australia is a multicultural country that is home to people from many different ethnic backgrounds. People can choose to practise any faith and there are many different religions, for example, Christianity, Buddhism, Islam, Hinduism and Judaism.

Students who speak English at school may also speak another language with their parents at home. You will always be placed with a host family that speaks English with you even if it is not their first language.

The size and structure of an Australian family varies. There are families of two parents with children, couples with no children, one-parent families, and families with elderly parents or other adults living with them. There are also 'blended' families, meaning that the parents have children living with them from their previous marriages or relationships.

Family activities and the possessions found inside homestay homes will differ from household to household. Do not compare your homestay with those of other students. Enjoy your homestay experience and the unique qualities of your host family.

Everyone helps

Most Australian families do not have household help. Often, both parents work so it is usual for every member of the family to help with household tasks. You may be asked to help in the kitchen, to clean your bedroom or do small tasks in the garden.

Houses

Many Australian families live in a house with a garden. It is common for houses to have three bedrooms, one or two bathrooms, a separate kitchen, living room and laundry. Houses are made from timber or brick and vary in style, size and age, so it is likely your homestay will be different to those of your classmates or group.

Bathrooms and toilets

Australians usually soap up and wash inside a shower cubicle or bath so water does not splash on the bathroom floor. The bath, shower and toilet are often in the same room.

Toilets are western, pedestal style and toilet paper (not water) is used. Males should lift the seat to urinate. Feminine hygiene products should be wrapped and placed in an appropriate rubbish bin. TIP: Water conservation is important to Australians so families may limit the amount of water they use. As a guide, a shower should take a maximum of 4 minutes, and you should half fill the bathtub if you take a bath.

Laundry

You will usually be asked to put your laundry in a place where it can be collected for washing. It is important that you do this on time so you have a supply of clean, dry clothes. Do not hang wet clothes in your bedroom or hang clothes over the heater. Your host will show you where to hang washing.

Meals

Australian families usually eat and drink in the kitchen, dining room or lounge of the home but sometime barbecues (BBQs) and picnics are held outside. Males, females and children help to prepare food, set and clear the table, wash and wipe dishes and put food items away.

Types of food

The food eaten by Australian families and the customs associated with eating can depend on the family's cultural background. Most families eat a wide variety of food influenced by different cultures and cooking styles.

If there are any foods that you cannot eat, you must tell your education agent so your homestay family is aware. Talk to your host family about foods that you like, or if you wish to cook them a dish from your home country. Ask if you can go grocery shopping to choose foods and snacks, and to learn more about the foods available in Australia.

Do not store food in your bedroom as this may attract ants and cockroaches. Queensland can be very hot and humid so make sure you replenish body fluids by drinking water throughout the day.

Etiquette

Meals are usually eaten with a knife and fork although some Australians will use chopsticks when eating Asian meals. In Australian culture, it is not polite to make noises such as slurping or burping while you are eating, and it is considered rude to speak with your mouth full. You should always say 'Thank you' to the person or people who prepare your meal.

Breakfast

Most families do not eat their morning meal (breakfast) together. It is usual for family members to make their own breakfast, for example, cereal, toast, fruit, yoghurt or eggs, with tea, coffee or fruit juice. If your host wants you to 'help yourself' to breakfast, you will be shown which foods you can eat and how to prepare them.

Lunch

This is eaten from midday / early afternoon and is usually something light, such as sandwiches and fruit or other snacks. If you are expected to make your own lunch, your homestay family will show you how to do this.

Dinner

The evening meal (dinner) is normally prepared by the mother or father and is usually a hot meal; the biggest of the day. Often dinner consists of meat, vegetables, rice or pasta. Many families sit down to eat and talk over dinner. This is a perfect time to practise your spoken English by telling your homestay family about school and your day.

Talking to the family

Your homestay family has been chosen because they are kind and understanding people. It is normal to feel nervous at first, but you will feel more comfortable when you get to know them better. When you meet, ask family members what they would like to be called and tell them what to call you.

Talking to your host family about your worries will help you to adjust to staying in a new country. Always ask questions if you don't understand or need help.

Understanding different accents can take time. Australians speak quite quickly and may sound different to your English teacher back home. Remember, no one will expect you to use perfect English and you will be praised and encouraged if you try. These tips will help you to communicate:

- Write down what you want to say if your written English is better than your spoken English.

- Draw a picture of what you want to say.
- Use a bilingual dictionary or online translation service.
- Mime or act out your message.
- Ask another student to interpret for you.
- Use the telephone interpreter service (your homestay or school can tell you about this).

TIP: If you spend a lot of time in your room, your homestay family may think you do not like them or that you are unhappy. Spend some time each day talking, watching TV or helping the family with household tasks.

Tell them about your culture and ask about theirs. This will help improve your English and make your homestay experience more enjoyable.

Using the telephone and internet

Most homestay families will not mind you calling your parents to tell them you have arrived safely, but you must ask each time you wish to use the telephone. Buying an international phone card at a news or convenience store will make it cheaper to call overseas. Other alternatives are to reverse charge the call, use a pay phone, or make an internet call.

Please ask your parents and friends not to call you after 9pm as this may be considered rude and disruptive.

When you arrive, your homestay parent will discuss internet usage with you, including time or download limits. It is not polite to spend hours on the internet as the whole family may need to use it. It is important that you follow internet safety instructions.

Safety

You must abide by the safety instructions you are given for inside and outside of your homestay. This includes travel safety, rules about pools, play equipment, bush and beach safety, personal security and internet safety.

Remember to let your host parents know where you are at ALL times.

TIP: You should ask your host family to write down their address, phone number, school emergency numbers and the number of the nearest bus stop to their home. Keep this information on your phone and on paper, and take it with you when you go out.

Pets

Many Australian families have a household pet, with cats and dogs being the most common. Pets live inside or outside the home depending on the family's preference. Domestic pets are house trained but are not allowed inside most public places, and must be kept on a leash unless in an 'off-leash' area. If you are afraid of, or allergic to, a particular animal you should tell your education agent and we will try to place you with a family without a pet. If this is not possible and you feel uncomfortable, ask your host family to keep the pet away from you.

Transport

Your homestay family will explain the best way to travel to and from school, and take you there on the first day. If you need to catch public transport they will tell you about timetables, stations/stops, travel cards and anything else you should know. You need to pay your own transport costs to and from school.

The family routine

Each family has their own sleeping routine but it is common for people to be in bed by 10pm on week nights. Showering, playing music and making meals can be noisy, so please be considerate and do these things earlier in the evening. Talk to your host family about mealtimes, what time you should be home in the evenings, and when to wake up and get ready for school in the mornings.

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